

Translated into 58 different languages (including 23 Asian ones and 7 African ones), this letter was written by Brother Roger of Taizé and made public during the meeting in Barcelona. It will be a starting-point for reflection, throughout the year 2001, during the weekly meetings in Taizé as well as those held in other parts of the world.

# Letter from Taizé

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## A Prospect of Happiness?

Letter 2001

1 Among the first words of Christ on earth we find these: "Happy the simple in heart... happy those who weep, they will be comforted... happy the merciful, mercy will be shown to them..." (see Matthew 5,1-12). See also Deuteronomy 4,40.

2 There are also other Gospel realities that bring happiness to a human life. Among them are trust and peace of heart.

3 Simplifying never means choosing a harsh, judgmental attitude devoid of generosity. The spirit of simplicity shines out in kind-heartedness. Our brothers in Taizé, as well as those who live on other continents among the very poor, are aware that we are called to a great simplicity of life. We have discovered that, sometimes with very limited means, we can be enabled to offer a hospitality we did not believe ourselves capable of.

4 The writer Dostoyevsky, an Orthodox Christian, wrote, "I know that men can be happy without losing the ability to live on earth. I do not want to believe, and I cannot believe, that evil is the normal condition of men." (From *A Writer's Journal*.)

5 The philosopher Paul Ricoeur, a Protestant Christian, writes, "I have nothing to reply to those who say, 'There is too much evil in the world for me to believe in God.' God does not want us to suffer. From being all-powerful, God becomes 'all-loving'. God's only power is unarmed love. God has no other power than to love and, when we are suffering, to address a word of assistance to us. Our difficulty is to be able to hear it."

If we could realize that a life of happiness is possible, even in hours of darkness...<sup>1</sup>

What makes life happy is to head towards simplicity: simplicity of our heart, and of our life.<sup>2</sup>

For a life to be beautiful, extraordinary abilities or great expertise are not required. There is happiness in the humble giving of oneself.

When simplicity is closely linked to kind-heartedness,<sup>3</sup> then even people without resources can create a space of hope around themselves.

Yes, God wants happiness for us!<sup>4</sup> But he never invites us to remain passive, or indifferent to the suffering of others.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, God encourages us to be creators, and to manage to create even in times of trial.

Our life is not subject to the whims of fate or to a blind destiny. Far from it! Our life finds meaning when it is above all the living response to a call from God.

But how can we recognize such a call and discover what God wants from us?

God wants us to be a reflection of his presence, bearers of a Gospel hope.<sup>6</sup>

All who respond to this call remain aware of their own frailties, and so keep these words of Christ in their heart: "Do not be afraid; just believe!"<sup>7</sup>

There are people who perceive, however faintly at first, that God's call for them is a vocation for their entire lifetime.<sup>8</sup>

The Holy Spirit has the strength to sustain a yes for our whole life. Has he not placed in us a desire for eternity and the infinite?

In the Spirit, at every age, it is possible to find new vitality and to say to ourselves, "Be steadfast of heart,<sup>9</sup> and keep going forward!"

And then, by his mysterious presence, the Holy Spirit brings about a change in our hearts, rapidly for some, imperceptibly for others. What had been obscure or even disturbing starts to become clear.

Until the end of our days, a yes spoken in trust can bring so much clarity.

Although we are called to make the gift of ourselves, we are not really built for such a gift. Christ understands our inner resistances. By overcoming them, we demonstrate our love to him.

Attentive to God's call, we understand that the Gospel invites us to take on responsibilities to alleviate human suffering.<sup>10</sup>

The faces of the innocent, of a great many poor people across the earth, question us: how can we share a hope with those who are so deprived of it?

And Christ's words in the Gospel offer a crystal-clear reply: "Whatever you do for the lowliest, you are doing for me."<sup>11</sup>

All God can do is give his love, and suffering never comes from God. God is not the author of evil; he wants neither human distress, nor wars,<sup>12</sup> nor natural

It is possible to discover God in particular through the lives of those who, often without realizing it, are a reflection of God among human beings.

7 Mark 5,36.

8 Some have already glimpsed this call in their childhood.

9 Sirach 2,2.

10 In a world in rapid evolution, science and research are making remarkable discoveries, among other things in order to ease suffering, to assist the most deprived. And new technologies are more indispensable than ever. There are opportunities, at times unexpected ones, to share with the poor and the excluded by working toward an economy of greater solidarity. Many NGOs (non-governmental organizations) play a positive role in this respect. In one Asian country, Bangladesh, another initiative is a source of hope. An agency was created to lend small sums of money to the poor. A minimal loan allows people to make a start with a work-project, and they reimburse the amount by making small payments each week. Programs have been started along these lines in many other countries, to help those who would be unable to borrow money from traditional banks—for example, in some Western countries, the unemployed.

11 Matthew 25,40.

12 Jean-Claude Mallet, an expert in international relations, writes, "We must keep building peace continually. It is never attained once and for all. At the end of the twentieth century, the century of world wars and genocides, we must unfortunately note that there are thirty-five armed conflicts, between or within nations, listed by the United Nations. So how can we avoid reflecting on ways to put an end to armed violence? Nothing appears to be more urgent at the beginning of the third millennium, because war wastes enormous economic, material and human resources which could have contributed to the effort of development, and also because war destroys human unity, between peoples and within each person. Each person can contribute to building peace, not as the world does (John 14,27) by victory over others, by conquest, but by victory over oneself and by allowing reconciliation to spring up. In the ongoing search for peace, inner reconciliation and public acts of reconciliation go hand in hand. All forms of hatred separate me from myself and others. Working for reconciliation among peoples also means leading each person to break the circle in which they tend to enclose themselves, helping them to go out of themselves and towards others: peace is of the order of freedom and love."

# Messages Sent to Taizé

## Pope John Paul II

To Brother Roger of Taizé

Dear Brother, on the occasion of the twenty-third European meeting organized by the Taizé Community in Barcelona, the Pope encourages the young people present, who have come this year from all the continents, to propagate generously, with their characteristic enthusiasm, the Gospel climate experienced during World Youth Day in Rome.

In our humanity, there are many broken places that disfigure the face of Christ by tearing apart the hearts of human beings, made in the image of God. How good it is to let the words of the Word made flesh ring out: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full!" (John 10,10). On the eve of the third millennium, may the roads of dialogue, brotherhood and prayer represent the bold response of the young to enable the blossoming of that springtime of life, reconciliation and salvation ardently desired by Christ.

The Pope remembers with emotion the origins of the community which you founded sixty years ago on the hill of Taizé, with the desire to contribute to the ecumenical dialogue and, following the example of Christ, to welcome all who would knock at your door. Invoking the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the Queen of Peace, the Holy Father asks God to bless you and to bless all the brothers of Taizé, the young people who are taking part in this meeting, the people who are helping to run it, as well as the parishes and families who are offering you hospitality.

## Patriarch Bartholomeos of Constantinople

It is with a fatherly affection and much love in Christ our God and Savior that we greet the participants in the twenty-third young adult European meeting that is being held this year in Barcelona at the initiative of the Taizé Community. We rejoice particularly in the fact that this year the meeting is taking on a broadly ecumenical character, since young people from throughout the world have been invited to join the young Europeans.

This year's meeting also acquires particular significance because of two historic dates: the sixtieth anniversary of the Taizé Community, and the two thousand years of the Incarnation of our Savior.

Giving glory to God, we paternally invite the young of Europe and of the whole world gathered together in His name to entrust their hopes and aspirations to the Lord and to work with ardor for the renewal and the salvation of the world in Jesus Christ. May the dawning of the new year of the new century and of the new millennium be for the young the starting-point for new orientations and new spiritual combats, so that we may be worthy, according to His promise, "of new heavens and a new earth where justice dwells" (2 Peter 3,13).

We invoke on you and on this meeting the grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, praying that our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you "to guide your steps on the road to peace" (Luke 1,79).

## The Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan

Like every year, you have come from throughout Europe and even from other continents to celebrate together the faith that unites you beyond your differences. The spirit of tolerance, brotherhood and solidarity that characterizes your meetings is an example for the rest of the world.

At a time when borders are disappearing and when peoples are becoming more and more interdependent, the precepts that you defend acquire a new meaning. Tolerance and solidarity, as a matter of fact, are among the values that heads of state and of governments viewed as fundamental for international relations in the twenty-first century, when they met in September in New York for the millennium summit meeting.

This year you are also celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of Taizé, and I am happy to congratulate you on this occasion for the sixty years you have devoted to the service of reconciliation and peace. Continue to defend these noble goals, so that the century that is beginning may be one of peace and dialogue between civilizations.

## The President of the European Commission, Mr Romano Prodi

...Many aspects associate the bold project launched sixty years ago by Brother Roger and the ambitious idea of an European Community conceived fifty years ago by our founding fathers. Both endeavours were born in reaction to the horrors of World War II, bringing together people of different nationalities, backgrounds and faiths to explore the possibility of reconciliation, human solidarity and mutual trust...

I know that many of the young adults participating to this meeting come from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Some of them have made a very long travel to come here, spending days and nights on coaches and trains. They are now staying with the families of Barcelona and of all the region who offered them hospitality. I wish this could serve as an example to our political leaders. We too must be prepared to welcome into our common house our fellow European citizens, who are enduring a long and difficult journey to catch up with the Union.

The peace and prosperity that we have enjoyed for half a century – and that the ongoing information revolution will further increase – cannot be the monopoly of a few, happy members of the family, but must be shared with everyone...

The participation of so many young people to this meeting gives us reason for hope: in an age often described as materialistic and selfish, this is the living proof of the active involvement of the new generations in building a better future, a better world.

## Patriarch Alexis II of Moscow

I warmly greet the meeting of young Christians representing many countries and various Christian confessions. These gatherings convened by the Taizé Community annually have become a good tradition, which promotes further development of inter-Christian dialogue and guarantees the future in which today's young people will live.

The present European meeting is held on the threshold of the third millennium since the Nativity of Christ. Therefore I wholeheartedly wish that it might become a vivid testimony that the coming new era will not turn into a so-called "post-Christian epoch," but that humanity will bring the good fruit of faith and love to its Creator, Who so loved the world that "He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3,16). It is this common Christian witness that the world needs so much today.

I would also like to congratulate the Taizé Community on its sixtieth anniversary. In 1940, the founder of the community, Brother Roger, like the Gospel's wise man (Matt 7,24), built it on the solid and unshakeable rock of a God-pleasing task, which was assistance to refugees escaping the horrors of the war. It is gratifying to see that this line of good deeds, including the holding of annual meetings of young Christians, continues to this day.

I ask God's help for the Taizé Community in its further efforts and initiatives. May the blessing of the Lord be with all the participants in this European meeting.

## The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey

My dear Brother Roger, it was with great joy that I received news of your twenty-third young adult European meeting, held this winter in Barcelona. And my joy was still greater when I heard that this event would also celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of Taizé. As you well know, these two things—young people and Taizé—are close to my heart, and I rejoice that they have come together in this way.

I still vividly remember my own first visit to Taizé in August 1992, when I led a pilgrimage of 1,000 young Anglican Christians from England. We set out from Canterbury Cathedral—itself a place of pilgrimage—and made our way by coach and ferry to your tiny village. Before we left Canterbury, I told the young people:

"I have never been to Taizé. Nor, I believe, have most of you. So we shall be on a pilgrimage of discovery together. I want to go to Taizé because I know it is a place which has changed and transformed the Christian lives of countless people, especially the young... Taizé is a place for the seeker after truth, the searcher after God, and in this life our Christian pilgrimage is never complete. An Archbishop must never forget that he is a seeker and a searcher after truth. And I want to do that searching at Taizé alongside those of you in the first years of your adult Christian lives."

And as you know, Brother Roger, the hope of our pilgrimage was not disappointed!

So my prayer for all of the young people with you in Barcelona is that they too will commit themselves to this search for truth: a truth that is living and transformative, a truth that leads to meaningful lives of joyful worship and service, a truth that demands our very best, a truth that finally is rooted in the reality of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God richly bless you all!

## Supporting Young People and Children

The Taizé Community does not accept any gifts for itself; it lives entirely by its own work. By its work, the community also takes on a part of the costs of the welcome: many young people cannot contribute to the cost of their stay, sometimes because they come from far away, whether in Europe or from other continents, sometimes because they have no work....

In addition, through "Operation Hope", to which anyone can contribute, the community has been supporting children who are poor or ill, in Senegal, in Bangladesh, in Brazil....

**IRELAND & UK:** "Operation Hope", account number 50005576/53.  
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Correspondence:

Letter from Taizé, 71250 Taizé-Communauté, France  
e-mail: letter@taize.fr www.taize.fr

Lettre 216 - DRA V. Rogeaux - Com. par. 0105K79608 - DL 928  
Ateliers et Presses de Taizé

# MEDITATING ON THE WORD

# MARCH

- These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé.  
The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.
- 1 Sun** Jesus said to the tempter: It is written: "Worship the Lord your God, him alone must you serve." *Lk 4:1-13*
- 2 Fri** The Lord God who will not forsake you. *Dt 4:29-31*
- 3 Sat** Jesus said: The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life to save many.
- 4 Sun** Jesus took Peter, John and James up onto a mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face changed. Then a cloud enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud saying: This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him. *Lk 9:28-36*
- 5 Mon** The Lord says: I will cure my people of their disloyalty, I shall love them with all my heart, I hear them and watch over them. *Hos 14:2-9*
- 6 Tue** God says: Love the foreigners among you as you love yourselves. *Lv 19:33-34*
- 7 Wed** We now put all our heart into following you, God, and seeking your face. Rescuse us in accordence with your wonderful deeds. *Dn 3:41-43*
- 8 Thu** Moses told the people: What I command you today is not too difficult for you nor beyond your reach. The Word is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice. *Dt 30:11-14*
- 9 Fri** Jesus said: Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. *Mt 11:25-30*
- 10 Sat** After being tempted in the desert, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God. "The time has come," he said, "the kingdom of God is at hand. Turn to God and believe in the good news of the Gospel." *Mk 1:12-15*
- 11 Sun** Jesus took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed. Then a cloud enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud saying: This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him. *Mt 13:1-23*
- 12 Mon** In a parable, Jesus said: The seed which was sown in good soil is like someone who hears the Word and understands it; that person bears fruit. *Rm 14:7-15*
- 13 Tue** I waited for the Lord and he heard my cry. He put a fresh song in my mouth a hymn of praise to our God. *Ps 40*
- 14 Wed** St. Paul writes: Let us stop judging one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any obstacle in the way of another. *Rm 14:13-19*
- 15 Thu** In the day, God sends his faithful love, and even at night the song it inspires in me is a prayer to the God of my life. *Mi 4:1-3*
- 16 Fri** Let us not become tired of doing good. The harvest will come in good time if we persevere. *Ga 6:7-10*
- 17 Sat** The Lord says: I desire faithful love, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings. *Ex 6:3-4,6*
- 18 Sun** The Lord says: I have seen the misery of my people. I have heard them crying out because of their oppressors, yes, I know their suffering and I have come down to rescue them. *Ex 3:1-15*
- 19 Mon** St JOSEPH An angel said to Joseph: Mary will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. *Mt 1:16-21*
- 20 Tue** While we live, as when we die, we belong to the Lord. For Christ died and returned to life that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. *Mk 3:31-35*
- 21 Wed** Jesus said: Whoever does God's will is a brother, a sister and a mother to me. *Ps 42*
- 22 Thu** Days will come when many peoples will come and say, "Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, so that he may teach us his ways." And they will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into bill-hooks. *Is 58:6-8*
- 23 Fri** There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear. *1 Jn 4:16-19*
- 24 Sat** Moses said: I stand firm and you will see what God will do to save you today. *Ex 14:5-31*
- 25 Sun** Paul writes: In Christ, God has reconciled us to himself and entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation. *Lk 1:26-38*
- 26 Mon** The angel said to Mary: Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. *Jr 29:11-14*
- 27 Tue** The plans I have for you, says the Lord, are plans not for disaster but for peace, to give you a future and a hope. *1 Co 1:26-31*
- 28 Wed** God chose things that by human standards are weak to confound the strong; God chose what is lowly and despised in the eyes of the world. *Ps 118*
- 29 Thu** If you break unjust chains to let the oppressed go free, if you share your food with the hungry and shelter the homeless, then your light will break forth like the dawn and your wound will be quickly healed. *Is 55:6-11*
- 30 Fri** In my distress, I called to the Lord. God heard me and set me free. *31 Sat* Seek the Lord while he is near. Turn to our God, who pardons freely. *Ex 14:5-31*

# MEDITATING ON THE WORD

# APRIL

- 1 SUN** Jesus said to the woman who had been brought before him: "Where are those who were accusing you? Has no one condemned you?" No one, sir", she said. "Neither do I condemn you", said Jesus, "Go, and sin no more." *Jn 8:1-11*
- 2 Mon** Those who know your name trust in you, Lord. For you never forsake those who seek you. *Ps 9*
- 3 Tue** God is light, in him there is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, we are in communion with one another. *1 Jn 1:1-7*
- 4 Wed** Jesus said: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. You must set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none to his. *Mt 5:44-48*
- 5 Thu** Jesus said: I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. *Jn 10:11-15*
- 6 Fri** Daniel prayed saying: Listen to the prayer of your servant. For we rely not on our good deeds but on your great mercy. *Dn 9:18-19*
- 7 Sat** See, your king is approaching, humble and riding on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden. *Mt 21:1-11*
- 8 SUN** PALM SUNDAY As Jesus came into Jerusalem, the crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God for all the miracles they had seen. They cried out: Blessed is the one who comes as king in the name of the Lord! *Lk 19:28-40*
- 9 Mon** Jesus is well able to understand our weakness. He was tempted in every way as we are, yet was without sin. So let us approach God with confidence, to receive his forgiveness and his love. *Heb 4:14-16*
- 10 Tue** Jesus said: When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to me. *Jn 12:30-36*
- 11 Wed** Jesus offered up prayer and entreaty to the one who could save him from death, he surrendered himself and he was heard. *Heb 5:1-10*
- 12 Thu** Jesus said: In truth, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains only a single grain. But if it dies, it yields a big harvest. *Jn 12:30-30*
- 13 Fri** GOOD FRIDAY Carrying his own cross, Jesus went out of the city to the place known as Golgotha where they crucified him. *Jn 19:16-27*
- 14 Sat** Christ was put to death in the body and raised to life in the Spirit. And in the Spirit he also went to announce the Gospel to those who once had refused to believe. *1 P 3:18-22*
- 15 SUN** EASTER DAY When Jesus' disciple entered the empty tomb, he saw and believed. *Ws 1:11-15*
- 16 Mon** God did not make death and takes no pleasure in the destruction of the living. God created all things for life. *Lk 4:14-30*
- 17 Tue** The Lord has sent me to bring good news to the poor and to proclaim freedom to those in captivity. *Ezr 1:17-20*
- 18 Wed** Jesus said: The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, for the kingdom of God is among you. *Mt 14:22-33*
- 19 Thu** Jesus came towards his disciples, walking on the water, and they were terrified; but at once he said to them: Courage! It is I. Do not be afraid. *Jn 1:4-8*
- 20 Fri** May God make your love increase so that it overflows for each other and for everyone. May God confirm your hearts. *1 Th 3:12-13*
- 21 Sat** Jesus said: I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark but will have the light of life. *Jn 8:12*
- 22 SUN** The Risen Christ said to the disciples: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." *Mt 21:33-43*
- 23 Mon** Jesus said: Have you never read in the scriptures: "The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing and we marvel at it"? *Mt 21:39*
- 24 Tue** The Lord says: I will give an undivided heart to my people. I will put a new spirit in them. *Lk 17:20-21*
- 25 Wed** St MARK Jesus sent out his disciples, saying: Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation. *Mk 16:15-20*
- 26 Thu** The Lord said to Jeremiah: Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you and consecrated you. *Jr 1:4-8*
- 27 Fri** Rest in God alone, my soul! He is the source of my hope. *Lk 24:13-35*
- 28 Sat** Having recognised the Risen Christ, the disciples of Emmaus said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" *Lk 24:13-35*
- These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

13 "Christ is united to every human being without exception, even if he or she is unaware of it." These words of utter clarity, written by Pope John Paul II, open the door to a new understanding of faith on earth. Trust in God becomes something more accessible.

14 A year ago, during one of the prayers of the European meeting in Warsaw, the Archbishop of Warsaw said, "You are not only committed to an ecumenism that would consist in bringing together divided Christian denominations. You go deeper, wanting to show God's fullness that leads to human fullness. In fact, it is first of all human beings who are broken. Today the basic problem is not only the divisions between Christians. The main thing is first helping human beings to find unity within themselves."

15 God is Spirit (John 4,24) and God's Spirit fills the entire universe (Wisdom 1,7).

16 At the very beginning of the Church, the apostle Paul already discovered this life of communion, and he wrote, "It is no longer I who live; Christ is living in me" (Galatians 2,20). Even a child can enter into this contemplative reality.

17 1 Peter 2,23-24.

18 Peace begins within us. As early as the fourth century Saint Ambrose of Milan wrote, "Begin the work of peace within yourself so that, once you are at peace yourself, you can bring peace to others."

19 The Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément writes, "God who is 'Love without limits' is not a distant sort of God, living in an overpowering eternity. (...) This is a God who is infinitely close to us, deeper within us than we are ourselves, so that however deep our despair may be, God is there, deeper still, standing between us and the void." (From the book *Taizé: A Meaning to Life*.)

20 Modern medical techniques are more and more able to palliate suffering, even for those who are dying.

21 Romans 8,26.

22 We can pray very simply at any moment. A few words spoken slowly or sung, five, ten times, from the bottom of the heart, can sustain our desire for a communion with God. For example these short prayers: "A thirst fills my soul, to surrender everything to you, Christ." – "You love us; your forgiveness and your presence in us bring to birth the brightness of trust." – "Christ Jesus, inner Light, do not let my darkness speak to me; make me able to welcome your love." – "In all things peace of heart, joy, simplicity, mercy."

23 One day I was with my brothers in Bangladesh, where they share the life of the very poor. We had been invited to a prayer meeting with the Muslims in the poor district where we were living. They wanted to express their gratitude for our presence there and for the sewing workshop that

disasters, nor violent accidents. God shares the pain of all who are undergoing times of trial and enables us to comfort those who are suffering.

God wants happiness for us: but where is the source of such a hope? It lies in a communion with God, alive at the center of each person's soul.<sup>13</sup>

Can we understand what we will be given? The day will come when the mystery of this communion with God takes hold of us. It touches what is unique and most intimate in the depths of our being.<sup>14</sup>

God is Spirit<sup>15</sup> and his presence remains invisible. He lives within us always, in times of darkness as well as when everything is bathed in light.<sup>16</sup>

Could there be chasms of the unknown in us, and also an abyss of guilt that comes from who knows where? God never threatens anyone,<sup>17</sup> and the forgiveness with which he inundates our lives brings healing to our soul.

How could a God of love impose himself by threats? Could God be a tyrant?

If doubts assail us, they are sometimes only interludes of unbelief, nothing more. Keeping watch over our thoughts can help us stand firm amidst the distractions that pull us in all directions.<sup>18</sup>

Could the impression arise that God is far from me, as if for a fleeting moment the inward eye could no longer see? We should remember that God never withdraws his presence.<sup>19</sup>

The Holy Spirit never leaves our soul: even at death communion with God remains. Knowing that God welcomes us forever into his love becomes a source of peaceful trust.<sup>20</sup>

Our prayer is a simple reality. Is it perhaps no more than a poor sigh? God hears us all the same. We should never forget that, at the heart of every person, the Holy Spirit is praying.<sup>21</sup>

And remaining in silence in the presence of God is in itself an inner attitude which opens the way to contemplation.<sup>22</sup>

As we enter the third millennium, are we sufficiently aware that, two thousand years ago, Christ came to earth not to start a new religion but to offer every human being a communion in God?<sup>23</sup>

The second millennium was an age when many Christians became separated from one another. Will we commit ourselves at once, yes, without delay, from the beginning of the third millennium, to do all that is necessary to live in communion<sup>24</sup> and to build peace in the world?

When Christians remain in great simplicity and in an infinite kindness of heart, when they seek to discover the profound beauty of the human soul, they are led to be in communion with one another in Christ<sup>25</sup> and to become seekers of peace everywhere on earth.

Are we aware that “every baptized person who disposes themselves inwardly to place their trust in the Mystery of the Faith is in the communion of Christ”<sup>26</sup>?

To be in communion with one another means loving and being loved, forgiving and being forgiven.

When that communion which is the Church becomes transparent by striving to love and to forgive, it enables Gospel realities to shine through with the freshness of springtime.<sup>27</sup> Will we enter soon into a springtime of the Church?

Christ calls us, the poor of the Gospel, to live out the hope of a communion and of peace and to let it shine out around us. This is something even the very simplest can achieve.

A prospect of happiness? Yes, God wants happiness for us! And there is happiness in the humble gift of oneself.

we had set up. One of these Muslims, walking back with me as the sun was setting, said to me, “All human beings have the same Master. This is a secret that has not yet been revealed. But later on people will find out.”

24 During his visit to Taizé in October 1986, Pope John Paul II proposed a road to communion by saying to our community: “...By wishing to be yourselves a ‘parable of community,’ you will help all you meet to be faithful to their church affiliation, the fruit of their education and their choice in conscience, but also to enter more and more deeply into the mystery of communion that the Church is in God’s plan.”

25 One question is becoming more important than ever: will Christians in the West and those in the East be able to discover a profound trust in one another? Many Western Christians love their Eastern brothers and sisters, both because they have undergone so many trials, and also because in them there are such transparent gifts of communion. In 1962 an Orthodox bishop from Saint Petersburg, Metropolitan Nikodim, came to Taizé. He was thinking hard about the future of Christians in the West as well as in the East. He bore within himself the hope of a communion and helped us understand that the secret of the Orthodox soul is found above all in a prayer open to contemplation. So many Orthodox Christians have known how to love in the midst of their trials. Kind-heartedness is a vital reality for many of them. They are living witnesses to a trust in the Holy Spirit. By their focus on the resurrection, they strengthen us in the essential of the faith. Today in Taizé, we try to be very attentive to the young people from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria.

26 Father Stanislas Lyonnet.

27 “It is not that the Gospel has changed, but that we are beginning to understand it better.” Pope John XXIII spoke these words just before he died. One day he also said, “In the current situation of society, prophets of doom see only ruin and calamity; they say that things have become much worse in our time, as if everything used to be perfect; they announce catastrophes, as if the world were close to its end.”

During our last meeting with John XXIII, three of us were present; my brothers Max and Alain were with me. He was already ill. Seeing us so affected by his imminent death, the Pope expressed his confidence in the future of our community. At another moment during the conversation, John XXIII explained to us how he sometimes made decisions while praying. “I speak with God,” he said. He paused a moment, and then added, “Oh, quite humbly! Oh, quite simply!”